UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/25380
8 March 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

NOTE VERBALE DATED 3 MARCH 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The Permanent Mission of Botswana to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to transmit for circulation a statement made by the Honourable Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration Lt. General M. S. Merafhe to the National Assembly on Botswana's participation in the United Nations Operations in Mozambique and Somalia.

The Permanent Mission would be grateful if the statement could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Annex

Statement by the Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration, Hon. Lt. General M. S. Merafhe, to the National Assembly on the participation of Botswana Defence Force in the United Nations Operations in Mozambique and Somalia

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the civil war that has been devastating Mozambique ever since attainment of independence in 1975. We are also aware of the Rome Peace Agreement which was signed on 4 October 1992, by the President of Mozambique, Mr. Joachim Chissano, and the RENAMO (Résistência Nacional Moçambicana) leader, Mr. Afonso Dhiakama.

Botswana has always been associated with efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Mozambique as a front-line State and a member of other regional and international organizations. Honourable members will recall that in September 1992, President Chissano and Mr. Dhiakama met here in Gaborone to talk about the prospects for peace in Mozambique. It was at that meeting that a common understanding for building peace in Mozambique was established. The Gaborone meeting was therefore a breakthrough.

Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 797 (1992) in December 1992, in which the Council decided to establish a United Nations Operation in Mozambique, Botswana was asked to contribute a battalion alongside other Members of the United Nations for the purpose of constituting a peace-keeping force in that country.

The purpose of the aforementioned resolution, amongst others, is to assist in creating an atmosphere conducive to the conduct of a general election in that country.

Botswana and Mozambique belong to the same region of southern Africa. We are both front-line States and members of SADC and other international organizations. Since the independence of Mozambique in 1975, the two countries have enjoyed cordial relations and fruitful cooperation. It is therefore only logical and natural that Botswana should accept the invitation from the United Nations to serve in the United Nations Operation in Mozambique. Accordingly, Botswana will send a battalion consisting of 670 members of the Botswana Defence Force to participate alongside other international forces. We accept this invitation not only because Mozambique is a friend and partner in development, we accept it also because Botswana has the obligation to assume its responsibilities to advance the cause of peace, democracy and human rights under the auspices of the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that this Honourable House and the Nation at large will now have a clear indication of why the Botswana Defence Force personnel are being deployed as part of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to brief the House about the continuation of our force in the humanitarian relief operation in Somalia.

Honourable members will recall that in the statement of 11 December 1992, delivered by my colleague, the Minister for Commerce and Industry, it was indicated that the mission to Somalia was conceived as a short-term operation, for the purpose of bringing humanitarian relief to the people of Somalia. By all accounts, the Unified Task Force or Operation Restore Hope in Somalia has been highly successful. Feeding centres have been established and transport routes to these centres have been opened. As I briefed the House on my visit to Somalia recently the Botswana Defence is performing excellently in these operations.

Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Secretary-General has formally requested Botswana to participate in the second phase of the United Nations Operation in Somalia. It would have been very difficult to turn down the request from the United Nations. Botswana has contributed to what has turned out to be a successful operation in phase one. It is only logical that we continue in phase two. In addition, phase two will be a purely United Nations operation. Botswana must be seen to shoulder its responsibilities in the United Nations when the opportunity arises. The Somali tragedy is a humanitarian cause which we must champion as a democratic country. However, Botswana's participation in phase two will be reduced from the current level of 300 to 200 men, in the light of manpower constraints.

Mr. Speaker, before concluding my statement, Honourable members may wish to know that the costs of our participation in both Somalia and Mozambique will be borne by the United Nations.